



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 18, 2006

Latest Traffic Safety News

U.S. Dept. Of Labor Announces Drug-Free Work Week To Improve Workplace Safety, Encourage Help-Seeking

U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao announced that October 16-22, 2006 will be the first ever Drug-Free Work Week and workers across the country are encouraged to participate. The purpose is to educate employers, employees and the general public about the importance of being drug-free as a component of improving workplace safety and health and to encourage workers with alcohol and drug problems to seek help. For ideas on how to recognize Drug-Free Work Week, visit <http://www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/wpdrug-free.asp>

Researchers Find Aggressive Driving Negates Benefits Of Safety Devices

Researchers at Purdue University analyzed Washington state data determined that airbags and antilock braking systems do not reduce the likelihood of crashes or injuries because they may encourage more aggressive driving, thwarting the potential benefits of such safety features. Fred Mannering, a professor of civil engineering at Purdue University calls this behavior phenomenon, the offset hypothesis, which predicts that consumers adapt to innovations meant to improve safety by becoming less vigilant about safety. For further information, visit, <http://news.uns.purdue.edu/html4ever/2006/060927ManneringOffset.html>

Court Rules Seat Belts Must Be Worn Properly

The Hawaiian Supreme Court ruled that the shoulder belt must be worn over the shoulder in order to be properly restrained stating that it would be absurd to interpret the law as permitting unsafe use of seat belts. The appellate court had ruled in favor of a female motorist who challenged her fine for violating the state seat belt law by placing the shoulder belt under her arm.

NTSB Reviews Most Wanted List

The National Transportation Safety Board recently identified the most important highway safety issues facing states today. At the top of the list is child occupant protection. Currently 35 states do not have laws requiring booster seat use for this age group. In addition, half of the states still lack primary seat belt usage laws. NTSB asked 25 states to enact primary laws. NTSB also has a wide range of recommendations for youth safety, the hard-core drinking driver, the school bus grade crossing safety. Visit www.nts.gov to view the "Most Wanted" list.

NTSB Held 2-Day Motorcycle Safety Forum

The growing number of motorcycle fatalities prompted the NTSB to hold a 2-day forum to bring together those with an interest and expertise in motorcycle safety. In 2005, motorcycle fatalities increased 13%, the eighth straight year that fatalities have increased. The NTSB may lead to recommendations to reduce the number and severity of crashes. States could do more to development and implement comprehensive motorcycle safety programs including rider training programs, use of protective gear, impaired riding, operator licensing and motorist share the road awareness. For further information, visit www.nts.gov



AAA Demonstrates The Dangers Of Improper Tire Care

According to a recent study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 27 percent of passenger cars and 32 percent of light trucks had at least one significantly under-inflated tire. Additionally, only 1 out of 5 motorists properly maintains the tire pressures on their vehicle and 69 percent of motorists do not know how to check tire tread depth. Since tires are the sole contact a motorist's vehicle has with the road, AAA will also educate motorists on the importance of routine tire care and other tire-related maintenance prior to the arrival of winter.

Side Air Bags Have Potential To Save 2000 Lives Each Year

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reports results of a side-impact crash study. Side airbags that protect people's heads are reducing driver deaths in cars struck on the near (driver) side by an estimated 37 percent. Airbags that protect only the chest and abdomen but not the head are reducing deaths by 26 percent. The Institute's study confirms that side airbags are reducing fatality risk in these crashes. Automakers are cooperating to reduce vehicle incompatibilities in both side and front collisions that lead to car occupant injuries, and a big part of this is to equip vehicles with side airbags. For further information, visit www.iihs.org

Little-Known California Law Requires Some Employers To Pay Stipend To Workers Who Don't Drive To Work

In 1992, California lawmakers enacted a law requiring certain employers to pay a monthly stipend to employees who carpool, ride public transit, walk or bike to work. According to Gennet Paaue, a spokeswoman for the California Air Resources Board, which administers the program, "a lot of employers don't even realize they should be doing it." To reduce traffic congestion, the Los Angeles City Council's Transportation Committee will consider how to go about implementing and enforcing the so-called parking cash-out law since 17% of all drivers offered cash in exchange for their free parking space will give up their vehicles according to Donald C. Shoup, a professor of urban planning at UCLA who helped write the state law. Under the parking cash-out program, employers must pay a stipend equal to the cost of a parking space to workers who do not drive to the office. The law covers public and private employers that have at least 50 employees and that offer free parking in a leased lot. Statewide, only Santa Monica enforces the law.

Clemson Researchers Educate Drivers And Pedestrians

Most drivers don't realize how poorly they see at night, so they don't slow down, says Clemson psychology professor Rick Tyrrell, a researcher who has been studying night vision for the past 20 years. And most pedestrians overestimate how visible they are to drivers, he says. That dangerous combination has inspired him to conduct more than 30 night-vision experiments in hopes of finding ways to help drivers and pedestrians be safer after dark. Most traffic fatalities happen at night even though there are fewer drivers. Tyrrell and his colleague, Johnell Brooks are using the school's driving simulator to test how well drivers of different ages see and steer as it gets dark, and comparing that to how well the subjects think they will perform the task. For further information, visit <http://cworld.clemson.edu/archive/2006/winter06/feature4.htm>

Traffic Injury Research Foundation Releases Educational Primer For Judges On Ignition Interlocks

The Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) has just released an educational primer for judges on ignition interlocks entitled, "Ignition Interlocks: From Research to Practice." The document is designed to provide judges with comprehensive information addressing the scientific, technical, and practical challenges and issues that are often raised regarding interlocks. The primer contains a summary of key research findings about interlocks, an outline of the technological features of interlocks, compelling



reasons to use interlocks, ways that offenders attempt to avoid interlock usage, and ways that this can be overcome. For more information, or to obtain a copy of the primer, contact:

www.trafficinjuryresearch.com

System To Warn Drivers Of Deer On Roadway

Several states plan to test roadside sensor systems that can detect large animals and warn drivers to reduce sometimes-deadly collisions between motor vehicles and deer, moose and other wildlife. One system, developed in Yellowstone National Park as part of a study paid for by 15 states and the Federal Highway Administration, is promising. The system developed by Sensor Technologies and Systems uses transmitters and microwave radio signals along a 1-mile stretch in Yellowstone. When a large animal crosses a signal's beam, beacons flash on top of signs to warn motorists they could encounter wildlife. At least three states are planning to implement this technology as soon as next month. Spikes in the wildlife population, more vehicles on the road and a growing number of people moving into once-rural areas are increasing the risk of these incidents. The number of crashes with large animals has been increasing over the last couple decades. More than a million collisions between vehicles and deer occur each year. Those incidents kill more than 200 motorists, injure 29,000 others and cause property damage of more than \$1 billion.

Continental AG To Provide GM A System For Motorists To Avoid Crashes

This week General Motors awarded Continental AG a contract for a system that helps motorists avoid crashes and protects passengers when crashes can't be avoided. The supplier of automotive electronics and power train components will sell GM sensors that go below the front grille and detect if the vehicle is about to hit an object. The system calculates the speed of the vehicle and the distance from the object and applies the braking power needed to help the driver avoid hitting the object. If the crash can't be avoided, other automatic functions occur, such as the sunroof closing and the seat moving into an upright position to prevent the driver from sliding or being ejected.

Text Messaging Becoming Major In-Vehicle Distraction

A Nuance survey of 1,000 drivers in the United States, Germany and Japan showed that 20 percent of the drivers were reading their text messages while driving, and 16 percent were sending messages. Nuance is a firm based in Burlington, Mass., that supplies the software applications for car manufacturers and aftermarket companies worldwide. This is not good news for motorists who live with the fear of distracted drivers on the road. For more information on the survey, visit nuance.com.

Source: The Providence Journal

Cell Phone Doubles As Breath-Testing Device

Some companies in Japan are using cell phones equipped with breath-testing sensors to ensure that employees are not under the influence of alcohol at work. The device, developed by NTT DoCoMo Inc., is being used by bus companies and other transportation firms stung by recent drunk-driving incidents and facing tough new government penalties for such offenses. Drivers are required to make a videophone call to the company and breath into the analyzing device on the phone. A warning displays if the driver's breath reveals an alcohol content exceeding Japan's legal limit for intoxication. The videophone prevents drivers from simply having someone else blow into the device, experts noted. Long-haul trucking firms also have found the device very useful, since drivers often do not return to the office after working and therefore cannot be tested for alcohol use in person.

Source: Join Together, October 4, 2006



Comparing Safety Climate Factors As Predictors Of Work-Related Driving Behavior

Research suggests safety climate is a strong predictor of safety-related outcomes in organizations. This study explores the relationship between six safety climate dimensions and four aspects of work-related driving. The safety climate factors measured were "communication and procedures," "work pressures," "relationships," "safety rules," "driver training," and "management commitment." The aspects of self-reported occupational driving measured were traffic violations, driver error, driving while distracted, and pre-trip vehicle maintenance. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that the safety climate factors accounted for significant amounts of variance in all four aspects of work-related driving, over and above the control factors of age, sex, and work-related driving exposure. However, further investigation indicated certain safety climate factors (particularly safety rules, communication, and management commitment) were more strongly related to specific aspects of work-related driving behavior than others. Together, the safety climate factors were better able to predict self-reported distraction from the road than the other aspects of driving behavior measured. Implications for occupational safety, particularly for the management of work-related drivers are discussed.

Wills AR, Watson B, Biggs HC. J Saf Res 2006.

Sunday Alcohol-Related Crashes Rise With 'Blue Law' Repeal

The repeal of a ban on Sunday sales of alcohol in New Mexico was followed by a 29-percent rise in alcohol-related auto crashes on Sundays and a 42-percent increase in alcohol-related traffic deaths, researchers say. Crashes and deaths have increased in the five years since the state repealed its "blue laws" banning Sunday alcohol sales. During that period, there were 543 more alcohol-related crashes and 42 deaths on Sundays than in the five years prior to repeal.

McMillan, G.P.; Lapham, S. (2006) Legalized Sunday Packaged Alcohol Sales and Alcohol-Related Traffic Crashes and Crash Fatalities in New Mexico. American Journal of Public Health.

News from the USDOT

Trucking Measure Heads to President

Congress recently approved legislation that would require the Department of Transportation to ensure that all 11 million commercial truckers in the United States are legal U.S. residents. The bill, which is sponsored by Sen. Mark Pryor (D-Ark.) and has the support of the trucking industry, would require that all commercial drivers have legal U.S. resident status and a Social Security number. The legislation also mandates that the Homeland Security Department make changes to immigration and customs laws to account for foreign truckers, especially truckers from Mexico. A report earlier this year from the Transportation Department's inspector general concluded that upward of 15,000 truckers might have procured fake licenses from 1998 to 2003. Pryor says that federal officials have done little to rectify this fraud.

Work-Life

Georgia Parents Notified By State Patrol When Teen Drivers Ticketed Or Warned

Governor Sonny Perdue announced a new initiative to help protect Georgia's youngest drivers – the Teen Driver Parental Notification Program that will be implemented across the state. The program is designed to initiate dialog between parents and teenagers after a teen driver has been stopped by a Georgia State Trooper for a traffic violation. The initiative will increase awareness of the dangers teen drivers face on the road since parents often never know when their child has received a traffic citation until insurance premiums increase, or when their child's driver's license has been suspended. Notifying parents of traffic violations by their children will encourage teen drivers to be more



Dan Vartanian
NETS Coordinator
Office of Highway Safety Planning
(517) 333-5322
vartanid@michigan.gov
www.michigan.gov/michnets





responsible when they are behind the wheel and help save lives. For further information, visit http://dps.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,5635600_6640623_67568879,00.html

International Traffic Safety News

Driver Safety Focus Of Satellite Navigation Review

The U.K. Department for Transport has launched a major consultation into the use of satellite navigation systems and is seeking an opinion on what risk they pose to driver safety. As the use of satellite navigation becomes more common, there is a need to ensure that the devices do not pose a safety risk through driver distraction. The consultation period started this week and is due to end in January next year. For further information, visit www.dft.gov.uk/roads/ivisconsultation.

UK Insurance Firm Using Pay-As-You-Drive Technology to Set Rates

Norwich Union will install satellite-tracking devices in 100K customer cars to record when and how far cars are driven. Customers receive a bill itemizing costs per trip. Rates higher between midnight-5 AM, 7 AM-10 AM since more crashes occur during these periods. Norwich Union predicts at least 50% of British drivers will switch to a pay-as-you-drive system. Civil liberties advocates are concerned about potential for abusive use of data by law enforcement as information will be recorded that shows vehicle speed before a crash, whether accelerating or decelerating. Some safety experts say system would make it easier to prosecute dangerous drivers. For further information, visit <http://www.norwichunion.com>

UK Nonprofit Urges Government to Reveal At-Work Crash Data

The UK national road safety charity, Brake is urging the Government to officially reveal how many at-work drivers are killed or injured on the roads following new figures that show more than 150 company vehicles are involved in a crash every day. The Department for Transport has issued detailed information on the number of road casualties in 2005 in an annual report revealing that 3,201 people were killed on Britain's roads, 1% fewer than in 2004, but does not include separate details of how many of those were at-work drivers. The figures now record the purpose of journeys and reveal that 54,935 at-work vehicles were involved in accidents during the year. One in seven (15%) vehicles involved in crashes were being driven for work and a further 9% to or from work. Brake says, "Road safety campaigners have suspected for many years that a large proportion of road crashes involve people driving for work. These figures demonstrate how important it is that, firstly, the Government takes corporate responsibility for at-work driving seriously and, secondly, all employers take the life-saving steps of educating employees on safe driving and effectively managing their road risk."

NETS e-Seminars



Driver Training: What Does Research Say About Its Effectiveness for Experienced Drivers?

Presentation Date:

Thursday, November 9 at 2:00 PM ET